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Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of

Revision of Part 15 Rules of the Commission's
Rules Regarding Ultra-Wideband
Transmission Systems

ET Docket No. 98-153 /

Reply Comments of the Common Ground Alliance

The Common Ground Alliance submits these comments in response to the Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM), FCC 00-163, in the proceeding referenced above. These comments address the use of ground penetrating radar and other geophysical technology in detecting, locating and mapping underground utilities for the purpose of preventing damage during construction and rehabilitation operations. The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is an organization spawned from efforts in Congress under the leadership of Senator Lott through funding and directives put forth in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. The US Department of Transportation Office of Pipeline Safety began efforts to collect all stakeholders in order to identify best practices in the underground utility construction industry. These efforts resulted in a document forged by all the stakeholder groups identifying best practices in planning and construction of underground utilities. After completing the Common Ground Best Practices Report, in late 2000 the private industry stakeholders formed the Common Ground Alliance to further the cause of preventing damage to underground utilities.

From a recent CGA press release: There is high praise for the organization. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) supported the Common Ground Study and the establishment of a private sector, non-profit organization to enhance protections to the underground infrastructure. "The Common Ground Alliance brings vast experience and knowledge from the many diverse stakeholders in construction work," Lott said. "This organization provides the necessary forum for all stakeholders to share valuable information about the best ways to protect underground facilities during excavation."

A number of geophysical technologies are utilized for locating and mapping existing utilities. These range from instruments that use a direct connection to metallic pipes and cables to put forth a locator signal that is subsequently detected by a receiver, to pulsed and stepped frequency ground penetrating radars. These instruments operate over differing frequencies depending on the system from under 10 KHz to over 1 GHz (refer to the various comments on this issue already submitted by Dr. Gary Olhoeft). Many of

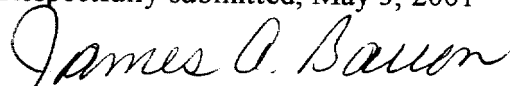
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the systems utilized for locating utilities have been employed for decades in others uses such as minerals exploration, oil and gas exploration, environmental site characterization, and forensic exploration. There is no body of evidence that these systems interfere with critical communications or other UWB systems.

The most promising geophysical systems for improving the construction industry's ability to map underground utilities are ground penetrating radar systems. These systems require the use of a UWB energy spectrum in order to penetrate the soil and have the resolution to map the various sizes of utilities. Forcing these systems to utilize much lower emission amplitudes or other detuning procedures may well render them useless for the purpose of damage prevention.

The Common Ground Alliance urges that FCC draft its rules to accomodate geophysical systems that protect public health and safety when making rules for regulation of UWB technologies. As continued utility construction increases the density and complexity of the underground infrastructure of the United States, it will be increasingly critical to develop more sophisticated means of mapping them for damage prevention during rehabilitation and new construction operations.

Respectfully submitted, May 3, 2001

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "James A. Barron".

James Barron, President
For the Board of Directors
Common Ground Alliance